

News-Topic Mission

The News-Topic will have a positive, active presence in the community by being the most complete source of local news and information in Caldwell County while providing accurate, complete, fair and balanced coverage of daily events.

Ballot change needed

The Herald-Sun of Durham

Let's say you've entered the voting booth, your mind made up:

You think the Republicans, from John McCain and Sarah Palin at the top of the ticket on down, are the way to go. Or, you're a Democrat through and through, from Barack Obama/Joe Biden to the bottom of the ticket. Or maybe Bob Barr, Mike Munger and the Libertarians are your choice.

You fill in the oval next to one of the three party labels under the "Straight Ticket Voting" and turn in your ballot, your civic duty done.

There would be one problem: You failed to vote for your presidential choice.

Somewhat confusingly, a "straight-party" vote in North Carolina doesn't encompass the presidential candidates.

The New York Times took the Tar Heel state to task on Monday for that confusing setup, even invoking memories of Florida's infamous "butterfly ballot" of 2000.

We think that's a bit extreme.

The ballots do explain the quirk. In Durham's sample ballot, the instructions under "Presidential Contest" point out that the offices of president and vice president aren't included in a straight-party vote and "must be voted separately."

Again, instructions under "Straight Party Voting" state, "A Straight Party vote does not vote for US President and Vice President, or nonpartisan offices or issues."

That last point is especially important in Durham, where voters are being asked to approve an additional one-percent on prepared foods such as restaurant meals. And there are several non-partisan races, including judges, on the ballot.

Although we think elections officials have tried hard to warn voters that the presidential choices aren't included in a straight-ticket, chances are some people will never get the word.

A better solution would be to change our ballots before the next presidential election cycle.

Stuck in the middle

Rocky Mount Telegram

After more than 30 years of one-sided presidential politics, North Carolina in 2008 has shed its stubborn red coat and joined the ranks of other neutrally colored toss-up states like Florida, Pennsylvania and Michigan.

And although most native North Carolinians would stop far short of admitting jealousy of residents in Ohio, it sure feels good to see presidential candidates pandering to our needs, for once.

Fancy this Tar Heels: Democrat Barack Obama is spending millions of dollars on TV commercials to earn your vote. Literally, millions.

That's not all. Obama has also been spotted in the last few months purchasing fruit at local farmers markets, drinking draft beer at a low-key Raleigh bar, and playing pick-up basketball in Chapel Hill.

Oh, and what about Republican John McCain and his running mate Sarah Palin? Recently, Palin told a Greenville crowd how she admires the underdog spirit of East Carolina University football. The Pirates lost the following weekend, but still.

All this attention begs the question, "Why did it take the state so long to make this political shift toward the middle?" For at least the next few days, North Carolina is guaranteed to be inundated with all sorts of political potpourri.

And while too many more stump speeches and TV ads might at some point overwhelm us, on a serious note, it will be worth the sacrifice to cast a meaningful ballot for president.

After all, there are big problems facing our nation. And for perhaps the first time in decades, the average North Carolinian will have a definitive say in who should solve them.

And that's nothing to joke about.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Voodoo politics

First, I agree that Sen. McCain has served his country well but I wish that he would stop using Joe the Plumber as his standard-bearer. Any small business earning \$250,000 a year has deductions for business expenses and personal exemptions so that the "taxable income" should be within the realm of the tax cut and not a tax increase. Second, while I concede that Sen. Obama has had no executive experience and has not been tested in a crisis situation, McCain should stop using the Cuban Missile Crisis as his test. It was, after all, JFK's call, not his. Few Presidents have had the experience or have been tested before taking office: Ronald Reagan, JFK, Carter, Clinton, and G.W. Bush, to name a few, other than being governors or Congressmen. Once in office, however, they were sorely tested: FDR, Eisenhower, Nixon, Reagan, JFK, G.H.W. Bush. G.W. Bush, unfortunately chose the wrong direction after 9/11. Third, McCain's economic theory about the effects of a tax cut for the higher income individuals, businesses and corporations smells a lot like, to use the euphemism, the "trickle-down" theory of Ronald Reagan who promised to cut taxes for the high income individuals, businesses and corporations so that there would be more jobs created and lower costs. He did. He cut the tax from 78 percent to 28 percent, further reduced by 2.6 percent by Clinton and an additional 4 percent by

G.W. Bush. During Reagan's administration, the median family income increased by \$4,000 but savings were drastically reduced or eliminated. In the last 20 years, the higher income group have had their taxes cut by 56.6 percent. In the 1890's this economic theory was known as the "horse and sparrow" theory. If you feed the horse enough oats, some will pass through to the road for the sparrows. Critics of this theory said it was the cause of the Panic of 1896. I feel that the higher income individuals have earned their money; let them keep it. But I believe in parity, too. Some individuals and businesses are now paying their fair share of taxes on their earnings. I commend them. But I challenge both candidates to eliminate the windfalls and loopholes so that those not now paying their fair share, do so without putting the tax burden on those already paying their fair share. Also, by cutting the capital gains tax in half for two years, (already at an all-time low of 15 percent), it will benefit you if you have stocks and bonds (excluding IRAs and pension plans) and real estate which, when sold, should reap huge profits. But with the economy facing a recession, it doesn't make sense to sell them now. On the other hand, if you have the money, you could buy stocks and real estate at bargain prices. While the premise is good that it should boost the economy, it hasn't worked very well in the past. Last, I wish that either candidate, once in office, would

introduce a bill to eliminate the \$1 out of the taxes paid that would be earmarked for the Presidential fund, and instead set that goal for \$5 for the Military Relief Fund. It's a travesty what the government pays to the head of a soldier who was killed in Iraq or Afghanistan compared to the compensation received by the families of 9/11 victims. Shame on you!!! Rush Limbaugh hit the nail on the head if you care to read his comments. Because of the government's inability to equitably compensate the military families, some states have now initiated their own fund.

voting with my heart for three good people. Now, I will change my vote to the three that have been identified through the Bollinger, Bratcher and Griffin campaign ad. Barbara, L.C. and Randy, you three also have the qualifications to be fine commissioners. Now that you have been endorsed by the other three through their campaign ad, you have my vote!

I encourage all Caldwell County Citizens to pray for God's will before entering the voting booth on Nov. 4. Vote with your heart!

Mike Edwards
Hudson

Bill Ballerini
Lenoir

Use your heart

During the past week I have noticed the "candidates for county commissioner campaign ads" published in the News-Topic. On Saturday an ad campaigning for Clay, Rob and Ben stated: "But I like Barbara...."

Then on Wednesday an ad from the same candidates stated

"But I like LC". Both ads went further to say "Our county commissioners have to deal with an \$80 million budget." Now, please note the next statement in the ad: "The days of voting your heart for a good person are gone." In my opinion, this type of thinking is what got this country and our county in the financial position we are in today. I must say, all three had my vote until I saw this ad. I thought I was

Remain faithful

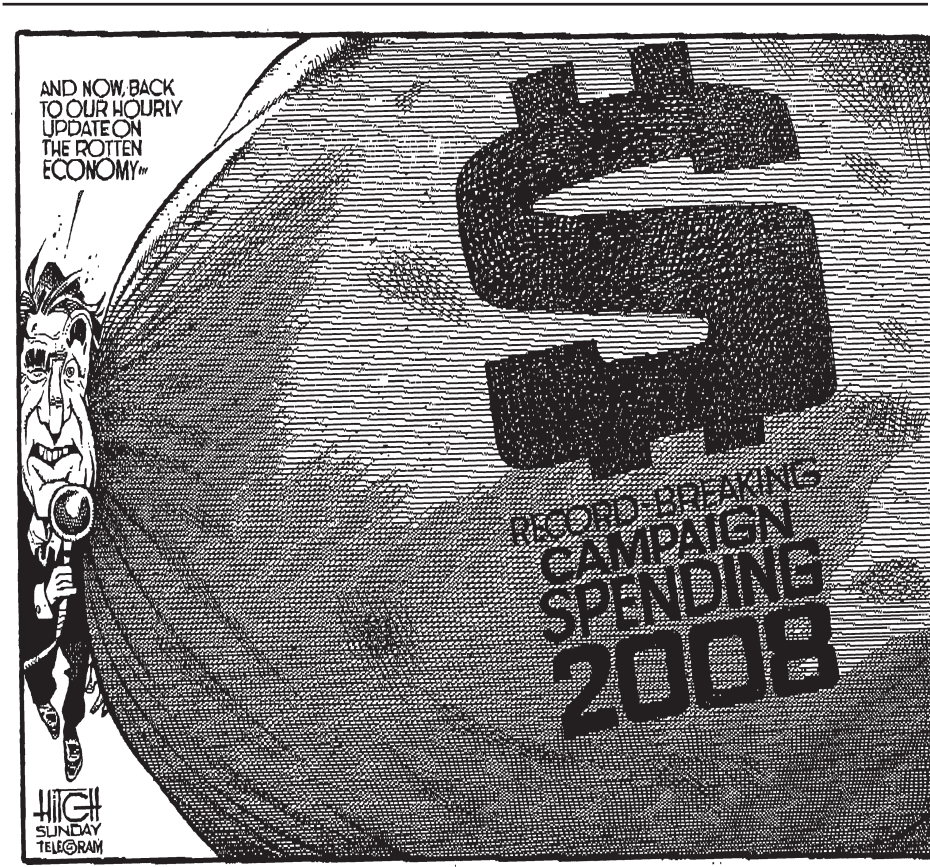
Being American, bilingual, and a woman of color in a European environment that could be supportive, I've had my share of job mobbing, employment dismissal, legal counter-attacks to the dismissal, and feeling like I'm caught in the middle of three different cultural systems (France, Germany, and Switzerland). Our bi-racial (African-American-Italian) multi-lingual, beautiful and gifted daughter is slowly beginning to accumulate her experiences of being "the one that the system just somehow doesn't know where to place."

I toil with the reality of being an intelligent, creative, beautiful and opinionated woman of color in an environment that is stubborn to yield. I personally feel that I have sometimes hit rock bottom and that everything stands still. I reminisce about how many times I was told by teachers in the South that black people's bodies were not constructed to dance ballet. I did not accept this belief. It did not tarnish my desire to persevere. I received my Master's in Performing Arts/Dance in 1981 anyway. When I ventured to New York to pursue employment in theatre, I noticed that the African Americans who got the jobs wore blue contact lens and long haired weaves. I had an afro. So I ventured to Europe and worked more than I ever did in all my years in theatre in the States.

I had to remain faithful. Faithful that the tide would turn. Faithful that the hard times would diminish and that tomorrow would bring the sun. I had to grow an exterior to prepare me for the hard lessons in life. I, too, think of my grandfather, the late Harry George Williams, who would, after a hard day's work in downtown Lenoir, come home and deliver dinners to senior citizens. I think of my brilliant Aunt Donna Williams, who has always been the rock that the family turns to in times of crisis. I think of my mother, Sylvia Greene, who continues to contribute artistically to the community of Lenoir with her creative expressions and transforms part of her home into a safe haven for children who simply want to read. Then, by the grace of God, I am lifted. I know that I do not have time to be tired. It is not in my genetic makeup. I keep my head held high and go to that job interview (even though it may mean driving an hour and a half to Zurich, Switzerland). I keep my mind focused on the light at the end of the tunnel. And, continuing on that same wave, I remain faithful and committed to assure that Barack Obama becomes the next President of the United States of America.

I am doing my part. I am certain that others are as well. But we must stay focused, alert and invincible.

Anna Greene Dell'Era
Kembs, France
(formerly of Lenoir)



The story we find ourselves in

History is the ongoing story of humankind and events through the ages. It is fascinating to imagine what it must have been like to have been a witness in various periods of history. No doubt most of us have heard grandparents or parents tell us their experiences as young people, young adults or even in older age.



Tom Campbell

Each of us is a participant in today's history, the story we find ourselves in. Wars, violence, poverty, and financial turbulence have left the world troubled today. There is a general sense that we have lost our way and don't have a clear course charted for the future. At the heart of what Jimmy Carter once called a "malaise" is a crisis in confidence. Call it skepticism, cynicism, pessimism... any of the "isms" you choose point to a loss of faith in the institutions of this culture. No less than Alan Greenspan, the former icon of America's financial sector and former Federal Reserve Chairman, admitted that he was surprised that the financial community would not work to preserve the best interests of shareholders, depositors, and the institutions itself. Essentially, those we have trusted to do the right thing in business, in government, and most every sector of our society have broken that trust and left us jaded, not knowing who to trust.

This crisis of confidence is playing heavily into our current elections. Our story features broken systems such as transportation, mental health, and, to some extent, public

education on a growing list. The worsening recession is impacting us in lost investments, reduced real estate values, lost jobs, and declining revenues to state and local governments. The coming year is already shaping up to be one of the more important in modern history.

Often our ancestors had little choice but to respond to events often beyond their control. Famines, storms, wars, epidemics and other such events often left them with few options, but such is not our story. We have the opportunity to affect how our future unfolds by voting. Arguably, Tuesday's elections may be the most important held in North Carolina since the Great Depression and perhaps the indecision being shown in many recent polls indicates the struggles we have in knowing which way to go or in whom to place our confidence. But it is the vote itself that is important.

A vote on Tuesday is a statement of faith and confidence in our process and our government. Regardless of your choices your vote is a statement that while you may not be content with the current story we find ourselves in, you still believe in our right to determine that future and are determined to make it better for ourselves and our children. Go vote.

Tom Campbell is former assistant North Carolina State Treasurer and is creator/host of NC SPIN, a weekly statewide television discussion of NC issues airing Sundays at 9 a.m., Mondays at 5:30 p.m. and Tuesdays at 12:30 p.m. on WTBL-TV. Contact him at www.nc-spin.com

News-Topic

The **News-Topic** encourages readers to write letters to the editor. Letters must be signed, and include an address and telephone number for verification. Letters may be edited for length or content.

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